

Bureau of Automotive Repair History

The Bureau of Automotive Repair (BAR) was established within the California Department of Consumer Affairs in 1972. Its formation was a result of the Automotive Repair Act of 1971, which mandated a statewide consumer protection program for automotive repair. With headquarters in Sacramento and eleven field offices throughout the state, BAR is headed by a Chief who is appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate.

Consumer Protection Operation

Through its statewide offices, BAR conducts consumer protection services related to automotive repair. BAR representatives register and regulate automotive repair dealers, accept and mediate auto repair complaints from the public, investigate violations of the Automotive Repair Act of 1971 and, when appropriate, refer cases to law enforcement authorities, and administer a statewide licensing program of repair facilities and service technicians in lamp and brake inspection and repair.

Currently, representatives handle more than 28,000 written consumer complaints and register more than 33,800 auto repair dealers annually. During the fiscal year 1995-96, BAR representatives negotiated refunds, rework, and adjustments valued at \$4.4 million from auto repair shops on behalf of consumers.

Smog Check Program

In addition to an auto repair consumer protection program, on September 9, 1982, California became the 20th state in the nation to adopt a vehicle inspection and maintenance (Smog Check) program, when the state Legislature passed Senate Bill 33 (Presley, Chapter 892). BAR is mandated by law to implement, maintain, and enforce the Smog Check Program. BAR licenses approximately 8,000 privately-owned Smog Check stations and 15,000 Smog Check technicians.

In 1984, BAR implemented the Smog Check Program in specifically designated areas of the state that had failed to meet federal and state clean air standards. The goal of Smog Check is to reduce air pollution by gasoline-powered passenger vehicles and light-duty trucks. To date, Smog Check is achieving an overall tailpipe emissions reduction of 17 percent in hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide from vehicles repaired after failing a Smog Check.

Smog Check II

Enhancements made to the Smog Check Program were passed by the State Legislature in 1994. Smog Check II focuses on Gross Polluters—vehicles that pollute at least two times the emissions allowed for a particular model and, in many cases, much more. These vehicles account for 10 to 15% of all California vehicles but create over 50% of vehicular smog. The Smog Check II program will use Remote Sensing Devices—mobile infrared smog sensors—to identify Gross Polluters between their biennial testing cycles. It will also use dynamometers to test vehicles in the smoggiest areas to detect another harmful pollutant, oxides of nitrogen (NOx), in addition to hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide. The goal of the Smog Check II program is to reduce emissions by 110 tons of pollutants a day to comply with the 1990 federal Clean Air Act Amendments. The program should be fully implemented statewide in 1998.